

## RUSSIA AND THE WEST IX IRAX

the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union/'<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, from the Soviet point of view the invasion of Iran in August, 1941, was something more than just the opening of a transit road for supplies of war materiel. It marked the end of the armed truce that had prevailed between Iran and Russia since the withdrawal of the Red Army from Gilan in 1921. After long years of ideological preparation, of training and indoctrinating the cadres of Communist agitators, an opportunity had come to put into practice the program so long conceived. For the first time after twenty years of self-restraint did the Red Army in large formations enter an oriental Asiatic country. The stage was open for bold moves. Britain, a traditional rival in the East, was in alliance with Russia and was not expected to put up obstacles to Soviet activities in northern Iran. There was no other Big-Power opposition. The mortal danger that the German attack presented to the Soviet State was not to distract the latter from careful execution of its plans in the Iranian "semi-colony."

### CONDITIONS IN THE SOVIET ZONE OF OCCUPATION

From the very beginning there was an obvious difference between conditions in the Soviet and British zones. Whereas the British considered their presence in Iran a temporary expedient and treated the country as a transit road to be kept in order and free from enemy menace, the Russians gave early signs that they were embarking upon a long-range policy that would effect basic changes in the political, economic, and social life of the provinces under their occupation.

In contrast to the British zone, wherein complete freedom of travel applied, the Soviet zone was closed to foreigners. Special passes difficult to obtain were issued by the Soviet Embassy in Teheran to those who wished to travel to the north. This limitation did not apply to the Iranians, but because of the many foreign advisers employed by the Iranian government it proved to be very onerous. Allied diplomats accredited to the government of Iran were barred from traveling and reporting on conditions prevailing in the most pros-

**2 *Xazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941*, p. 359.**